

# **USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN B2B MARKETING – CASE: MIRACLE FINLAND**

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The goal of the thesis is to create a social media plan for Miracle Finland Oy. It is a small, Finnish IT company located in Helsinki. Social media plan is created because the company wants to increase customers' awareness as well as improve own brand image.

Social media is popular since it gives the power to the audience. Especially in the recent couple of years the power has been shifting to them more and more. Instead of being passive receivers of information, people have realised that they can interact with companies in social media. This means that instead of being just advertised to, the audience wants to see content with value. This is what led to using the theory of planned behaviour as a guideline for writing.

Constantly rising activity in social media as well as multiple business to business marketing investments make social media channels the most sensible investment right now. Especially since the company does not want to use any extra money for marketing. The channels chosen for this thesis are LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook, since they're the biggest channels and have the widest reach in Finland.

LinkedIn is popular in Finland and best way to bring up a company since it is a channel meant for professional use. Whereas on Twitter, a face behind opinions is good to be seen, so the already popular account of the company's CEO was used. Facebook here is a bit of a wild card since it has the most expenses but ultimately the widest reach out of all three. Content marketing plan was created to help keep all the different channels cohesive.

Based on the theory recommendations were made to the company, how they can improve their social media presence and how they can achieve the best possible online brand image. While considering that most of the information has to be adapted to the Finnish internet culture and the size of the company has to be taken into account.

**Keywords**

Social Media, Business-to-Business, Marketing

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# 1 Introduction

Social media marketing has grown in the past couple of years. Last year multiple platforms turned their attention to business to business marketing. Social media channels have become an excellent way for companies to increase brand recognition and expand their clientele without expensive marketing campaigns. Three most popular social media channels –LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook – have been chosen to be explored in this thesis.

These channels were picked because they are the most popular social media channels in Finland with the biggest chance of contacting Miracle Finland Oy's target group. Miracle Finland Oy is a small Finnish IT company that this thesis is made for. The objective was to create a social media plan for the company and it has been redacted since it is sensitive information.

*LinkedIn* is meant for professionals, which means that direct contact with possible clients is encouraged. It also has means for other indirect marketing for example such as becoming an active member of a group and showcasing one's talents. LinkedIn is the main focus for Miracle Finland Oy since it is best place to get in contact with the company's target group – Oracle system users.

*Twitter* is a growing force in Finland and the CEO of the company has a popular account so the decision was made to utilize it in the company's social media mix. It is good to have a face for a small company, since in social media; the fact that there is a person behind the computer is easy to forget.

*Facebook* has made the biggest changes concerning business to business marketing. Although it is also the webpage with the most upkeep expenses, it excels in having the best targeted marketing. The website has the biggest user base and most information about its users which makes it the best investment for advertising funds.

*Content marketing plan* was made that the websites would maintain cohesive style and not depend on certain people doing the updates. The channels that a company uses need to have consistent style that does not change because of background factors.

Miracle Finland Oy uses only a small amount of channels because it doesn't have a worker whose specialty would only be social media platforms. The aim is to maintain quality channels with as little amount of work as possible, rather trying to stretch across multiple platforms because it can hurt the work that is being done to improve their brand image.

## **2 Social Media and Business to Business Marketing**

### **2.1 The Concept of Social Media**

The use of social media in marketing has increased exponentially in the recent years and it is known to be a great way to reach consumers. However the companies are often unsure of the usefulness of social media in business to business (B2B) marketing. The presence of businesses in social media has grown despite of these worries. The feeling of uncertainty with social media often comes from not having a content plan, content marketing plan nor set goals and how to measure them. (Martin-Wilbourn Partners 2016)

To find out what kind of goals a company should or can have and what kind of tools should be used to reach them, depend on the platform. Choosing the correct platform and knowing how your target market uses it is crucial. If company uses platforms that only some or none of their target audience is using they are wasting resources and time marketing to the wrong people. Being visible in the right social media channels can produce leads as well as improve brand image, visibility and the company is easier to discover. (Martin-Wilbourn Partners 2016)

#### **2.1.1 Theory of Planned Behavior**

The theory of planned behavior was developed by Icek Ajzen in 1985, 10 years after creating the theory of reasoned action with Martin Fishbein. (Wikipedia 2016) The theory of planned behavior is still in wide use today when pondering about possible customers' motivations. (Kendrick 2011) This theory was chosen because of the adapted figure highlighted the customers role the best when it comes to websites.

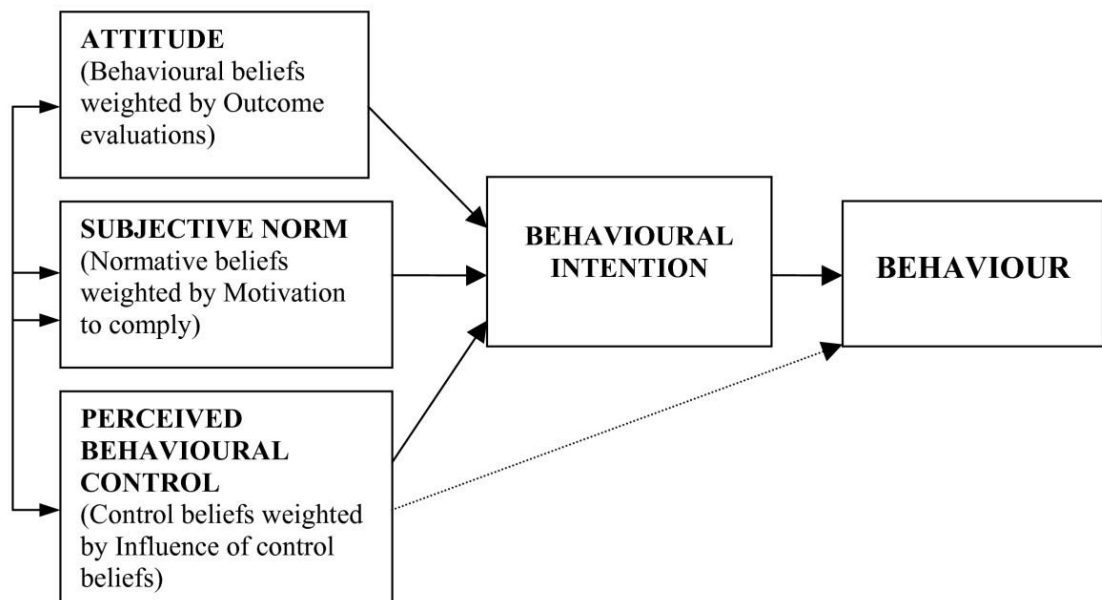


Figure 1: Theory of Planned Behavior (Figure of Theory of Planned Behavior 2016)

The theory composes of three separate elements: Attitude, Norms, and Perceived behavioral control. Attitude means the attitude one takes toward the specific act they need to accomplish. Norms are built from what others expect us to do and what the society or community might have taught us. Perceived behavioral control is the control one is believed to have over their actions. (Kendrick 2011)

These components direct ones behavior in a way that first one creates an intention to do something and then they carry the intention out if possible. The carrying out of an intention can be kept from happening because of external factors. For example one chooses to go to buy groceries but the stores are closed. In the theory it is suggested that the more positive the three components are (attitude, norms and perceived behavioral control) the stronger the behavioral intent gets. (Kendrick 2011)

In this model that was adapted from Ajzen's theory of planned behavior we can see an example of how said theory can be used when referring to people's behavior on the internet.

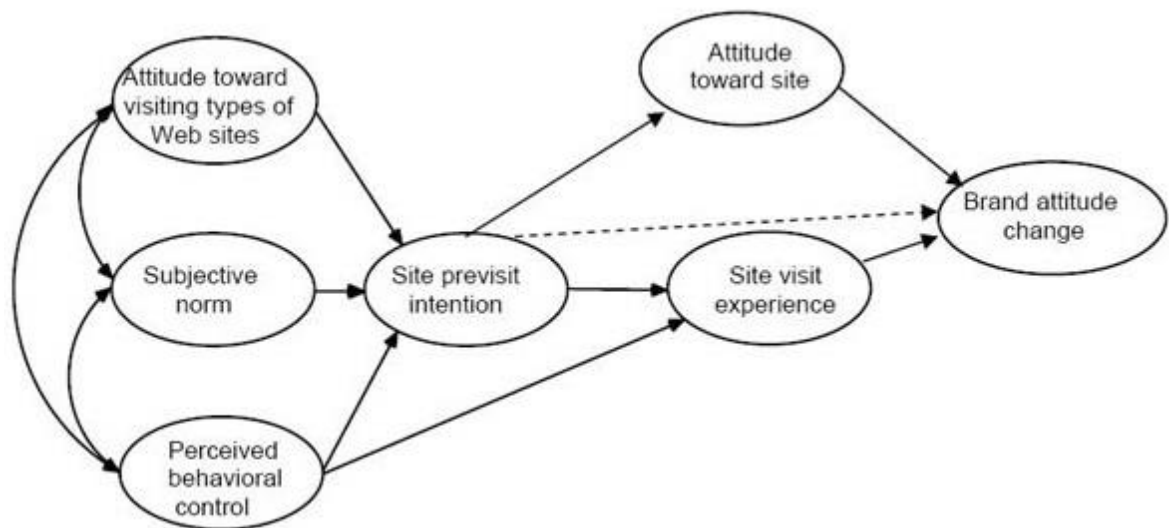


Figure 2: Interpretation of Theory of Planned Behavior (Wu 2007)

Brand image is a term meaning the conception a person has of a brand in their mind. This includes the brand's imaginary and real qualities. (Business Dictionary 2016) This image is what makes people have attitudes toward certain brands even on the internet. The attitude people have toward certain websites or types of content might affect the way they view the company using them. In addition the way the company uses a platform can also affect how people look at the company, especially with the younger crowd. If company is perceived as to not using the website 'correctly', by their target market, it can lower the positive brand image the company might have had previously.

Company should only focus on the social media platforms they know their target audience regularly visits. Focusing resources like this is important since many companies make the mistake of trying to be everywhere at once and it can have negative impact on the quality of content. To avoid extra work and to find the correct audience it needs to be understood what type of people visit certain sites and where to find the ones in a company's target group. (Content Marketing Institute 1 2015)

In this thesis the idea is to talk about using social media from Business-to-Business (B2B) point of view. Audience based thinking is highlighted since it's more and more common to start marketing from the question 'What does the customer get out of this'. This sentence is even more important in the virtual world. There the possibilities are endless, if the content is not up to their standards there's nothing from keeping them from going somewhere else. (Lefevbre 13 January 2012)

Where in regular marketing things like distance and weather might have an effect on where people shop for example, this kind of thing don't exist in internet. This is why what the company has to offer to their social media followers — type of thinking has been highlighted, rather than how can they be convinced to buy. The buying comes after the audience has had a positive experience with the company, and feel like they get something from the company as well instead of feeling exploited. (Lefevbre 13 January 2012)

## **2.2 Social Media as B2B Communication Tools**

### **2.2.1 LinkedIn**

LinkedIn is a social media website that is directed towards professionals. It was founded in 2003 and has over 400 million users worldwide. With its mission “to make professionals more productive and successful”, the company has grown to be the largest professional network on the internet. (LinkedIn 2016) The site enables the creation of networks and building relationships as well as conducting market research, establishing thought leadership and improving reputation among other things. (Wit 2015; Wakefield 2015)

When designing the company LinkedIn page, showcasing the company's abilities is the key. Possible clients want to see what the company can do for them and why they should choose the company in question. Choosing a good cover photo can be a crucial element to some since good visuals can make all the difference in how the company is being viewed – especially if most of the business will be handled online. (Wakefield 2015)

Since LinkedIn is a networking tool created for professionals and companies, it's ideal for increasing online presence for businesses. People who have problems at work that need solving can easily find their solution in the space intended for work related story sharing. And as nowadays people tend to be quite wary of marketing, a good review from their friend can be what they need to make a decision. (Wit 2015)

With its great ways of indirect marketing and possibilities of contacting potential customers directly, LinkedIn isn't the ideal for basic advertisement. Despite of the opportunity of paying for advertisements on the site, it has been shown that LinkedIn's advertisements aren't necessarily worth the money. Compared to other social medias LinkedIn's user base is quite small with not as precise targeting as e.g. Facebook while being more costly.

Since marketing and making oneself known through social media isn't like traditional media, no one can succeed without giving something to the audience they're trying to reach.



Traditional marketing media is more a company telling their market that this is what's available, when marketing through social media is more about showcasing what the company can give to their followers and why potential customers should start following them. This is the way to begin the journey to get the customer to buy something rather than only pushing the product. Customer needs to see what they're getting out of it. (Wakefield 2015)

One of these kinds of examples is LinkedIn Groups. They can be a great way for a company to follow what is happening on their field of business as well as show their expertise. It's important to be an active member of the group if a company wants to be seen. Interacting with groups is a part of becoming a thought leader. (Wakefield 2015)

For a business to establish itself as a thought leader would be good. This can be done through joining LinkedIn groups and being an active member as well as actively posting about current issues. It can be used to showcase what the people in the company can do. Being a thought leader can also ensure that, when people have trouble in their work that relates to the company that has become thought leader – people are inclined to search them out for answers without even thinking about competition. (Wit 2015)

LinkedIn has been found to be the best platform when it comes to generating leads and sales for B2B marketers. (Wakefield 2015) Instead of only regular ad placement, LinkedIn has the opportunity for a company and its potential clients to connect and companies can do much more indirect marketing by just showing up on their feeds. This is a big factor when it comes to increasing the possibility of sales compared to other social media platforms. Since this website is meant as a tool for professionals, it doesn't feel intrusive for a company to contact a person directly, while other platforms might have this risk. (Wit 2015)

### **2.2.2 Twitter**

Twitter is known for its 140 characters. With today's hectic world people want to be able to check up on others as well as share their own thoughts quickly. This channel makes finding out about news easy, since the character limit makes sure only the most relevant info is posted. (Twitter 2016) The company was established in 2006 and has (Bloomberg Business 1 2016) 320 Million active users. (Twitter 2016)

Twitter can be used as a tool with which you can manage, share, and test different types of content. This it accomplishes by its simple publishing, its ability to monitor engagement

as well as its connectivity with other social media platforms. Besides making company's own content Twitter is a great way to find out customer and content insights. (Brainrider 2015)

Many companies make the mistake of thinking that their Twitter should be only about them and their own products. Like in all social media the audience wants to see good quality content that is achieved by not only having your own content but showing them other interesting content as well. Depending on time of day and how many people your followers follow your personal content might get lost in the feed. This isn't as big of a problem as someone's feed being completely blocked by your advertisements. So to avoid that, companies should try to find balance between endorsing themselves as well as other interesting content. (Brainrider 2015)

Although company's actual Twitter page should be all about them. Customizing the Twitter page is in crucial because the followers should recognize who they're following. It's also important to have a link to the company website since people will rather follow the information from the site they're already on than moving to google to figure out where to go. Though counting clicks on your website begins to be outdated method of seeing if you're successful. In Twitter – like Facebook – analytic tools allow you to see how many people have e.g. mentioned you, clicked on your links or retweeted you. (Brainrider 2015)

Fist to gain followers the company should find out who follows their competitor or their field all together and go follow them. Follow for follow is a really common concept nowadays, and even though not all people follow back, the majority will and this will give the company a good starting point. When they already have followers their tweets are more likely to spread and get them new followers. Of course big companies can also include Twitter to their regular campaigns "follow us on Twitter" but for smaller companies this isn't usually an option. (Brainrider 2015)

Tweets should be scheduled beforehand. This means using extra tools outside of the platform but that is the case in social media if company wants to have a professional look in any platform. This makes sure that no one will be swamped by the company's tweets but also allows the company to test at which times of day their tweets get the best response. This can be crucial to companies that have overseas business since their followers might live on a different time zone. This allows the company to cater to local and further away clientele via social media. Scheduling tweets gives any company the advantage of strategizing tweets and making use of the best times of day. (Brainrider 2015)

Twitter commissioned a research from Market Probe International to see how effective it was as a platform for B2B businesses. They found out that people are far more likely to buy things from business they follow than those that they do not. People's likelihood of visiting a business rises when a friend has recommended it and people feel over all more connected with companies when following them. This being said Twitter makes for excellent brand (awareness) building tool. (Horton 16 September 2014)

If the company has something big coming up instead of constantly coming up with new tweets they can easily recycle them by making "in case you missed it" post at a different time if they feel like the first one went a miss. Advertisers need to be careful though because not everything should be recycled it makes the writer look lazy in the eyes of the audience. (Horton 16 September 2014)

Even though Twitter gives the writer 140 characters to work with it's more likely to get re-tweeted if the tweet is 120 characters or less. This is important notion for companies since social media platforms are usually used to increase exposure. Another good way to increase exposure is giving shout outs to people. It also shows your followers that you notice them. So if the company's followers are people working on the field and e.g. they are speaking in a conference it can be a good idea to tweet about that or possibly retweet them. (Horton 16 September 2014)

When scheduling tweets it needs to be noted that people like to think that there is a human behind the feed. Therefore if multiple tweets are popping up at exactly the same time it tells people that you're using scheduling tools. Using tools is normal and not frowned upon but companies also shouldn't come across as robotic either. (Horton 16 September 2014)

### **2.2.3 Facebook**

Facebook is a social networking site, known for its wide reach through generations. It has multiple features such as messenger which allows people to message from computers as well as mobile devices, complex newsfeed algorithm that defines what one sees and most evolved market targeting system of all social media sites. It has been put to bigger use in the past year with the site growing its B2B side. Facebook was founded in 2004 and has 890 million daily users as well as over billion monthly users. (Bloomberg Business 2 2016)

Big misconception with the site is that it's good only for business to consumer marketing. Case studies have shown that this isn't always the case. Where many people only use

Facebook to engage in their personal interests, mostly people are looking for distractions. The users want to see something interesting they can spend their time on and if the interesting thing will help them with their work they'll be likely to click on it. This is only helped with the fact that the line between work and home has blurred. Many people are willing to use some of their free time to browse interesting links if they feel it will benefit them at work. (Carter 2015)

Case studies have proven that businesses can make money and generate leads from Facebook. Some advertisers have also found that their target audience wasn't answering positively to their message so they were able to change their plans before using more money into trying to convince businesses from that field since they had no interest in the first place. So Facebook can work as a gauge to see if your perceived target group has any interest in you or if you should change. Before drawing direct conclusions from Facebook the advertiser needs to find out if that is the right channel to choose – is the lack of interest towards your company caused by poor choice of social media or genuine disinterest. (Carter 2015)

There are a couple of advantages to Facebook advertising when compared with LinkedIn and Google advertising. Facebook has a large audience and the site lets advertisers target people based on different features. You can do this with LinkedIn as well but the audience is a lot smaller. Google on the other hand has great audience but no targeting so you might waste money on people that aren't part of your target group. Facebook is said to have the cheapest advertisements of the three (LinkedIn, Google and Facebook) when paid by click. The other sites reward advertiser for testing e.g. different target groups with barely anything, where Facebook lowers the costs up to 50% though this requires active testing in your advertisements. (Carter 2015)

The main goal of B2B advertising is to generate leads by taking advantage of the tools provided. The advertising company should use Facebook's Ad Manager to control the advertisements. From here you should be able to collect the emails of potential customers in order to do follow up. Advertiser should see how many people sign up from those that click the ad to measure success of said advertisement. Facebook can also help businesses cater better to their target audience by giving insights in their tools. This tool isn't made separately every company – only a couple – but you can get tips on how to proceed if you take a look on the insight of a bigger company. With this insight in mind you can also test which kinds of advertisements generate the most clicks – would a different picture work better or is this the best possible font? (Carter 2015)

This all being said it is important to remember that where Facebook advertising can help you get leads and having a good, regularly active page to support the ads, a Facebook page on its own isn't likely to generate leads. (Carter 2015)

#### **2.2.4 Content Marketing**

To enhance the chance of success in increasing positive brand awareness Content marketing strategy is needed. This strategy is focused on helping marketers develop a story that helps the organization in engaging audience and help evoke profitable behavior. Content marketing plan is to act as framework which entails key business and customers' needs as well as how said needs are going to be addressed via content. (Content Marketing Institute 1 2015)

This differs from Content strategy by not going as deeply into the subject of how content itself is being made or handled but Content marketing strategy is more about how content can be used to get to where the business wants. Mission and business goals should stay consistent even when content marketing program evolves. They should be kept in mind every time new content is created: does the content created work towards the ultimate goals. In addition the content marketing strategy should be updated occasionally to ensure that the strategy remains on target. This is very important now that social media is growing and changing all the time. (Content Marketing Institute 1 2015)

The plan begins by stating why you are making content, the risks that are involved, and what will you consider success. The goals the content program should achieve, and the unique value given to the audience, are to be stated as well as the obstacles and opportunities that may become during the plan execution. (Content Marketing Institute 1 2015)

It also needs to be specified who the content is created for and what they need from it. For some plans it is good to mention what kind of content the company can deliver throughout the buyers' journey to move them closer to the buying decision. For all companies mentioning what kind of ideas and images the company wants to communicate is key, how they will differ from competition, and how the landscape might change once the content is shared with the audience. (Content Marketing Institute 1 2015)

Since new social media platforms are constantly popping up it is important to recognize which platforms are being used by company's target group and where the efforts should be placed. One of the biggest mistakes companies make is trying to be on all of the platforms when they should be only where their wanted audience is. When these platforms

are chosen there needs to be cohesion through the channels so that audience can recognize the company no matter the platform. (Content Marketing Institute 1 2015)

Companies that have a content marketing strategy feel that their use of social media channels as well as their use of marketing tactics has increased because having said plan. (Content Marketing Institute 1 2015) But even then the best content does not beat a warm handshake. It is important to have good presence in the internet since that's the go to place for information nowadays. Equally important is to remember to keep the personal touch so that the audience can feel like they are talking to real people so getting in contact with the company feels easy. (Häkkinen 9 January 2015)

### **2.2.5 Company website**

These days when people are used to everything being digitalized a good website can be everything to a company. And at the least people are used to finding the very basic information from any company on the internet. But a well-built website tells the audience more than the basic information. It can convince new customers to make their first buy or make them remember the company when their expertise is needed. (Outing 24 August 2004)

Unlike previously has thought a website isn't only about the content. In fact a study has shown that the design of a website is more likely to convince the audience of a website's trustworthiness rather than the content. Another old habit that has been proven wrong is "above the fold". Not everything needs to be seen right away and the top of the page should be save for only the most important information. So finding out what your audience wants to know and making sure it's easily accessible. (Outing 24 August 2004)

To achieve clutter free and easy navigation on their page they can utilize the KISS (Keep It Stupid Simple) principle. This helps in making the page comfortable to use. In addition visual hierarchy should be created by using different colors. This guides the consumer by indicating which links are the most important, where you want their eye to go on the site, etc. Person's gaze can be directed with other visual clues, such as arrows, as well. (Outing 24 August 2004)

Instead of images, headlines are the most viewed items on a website according to Eye-track III, a study of web usability. A headline usually attracts viewers, because they tell what the page is about, and is it from them. (Outing 24 August 2004)

White space increases reading capacity and creates contrasts between different elements on a website. Having good amounts of white space on a text heavy page is crucial to the

reading ability and comfort. You want your audience to be able to consume the content with ease. (Patel 20 December 2012)

Customer stories are a great way of convincing the audience of a company's capabilities. However they should not be the first thing that pops up on a site but should be easily accessible. People on the internet are impatient and nothing is worse than a slow website. So having good enough servers is important so that potential customers will not be turned away. (Patel 20 December 2012)

People are not afraid of exploring a website these days. While having a clear and easy to explore site is important, companies should not be afraid to have a lot of content. Studies have that users often scroll to the bottom of the page if they find the content interesting rather than staying "above the fold". Here having long texts and much content the headlines become more important. People want to be able to find quickly the content that they are searching for. Longer pages are also more effecting in converting hesitant consumers than shorter ones – as long as the page is well designed. (Patel 20 December 2012)

### **3 Analysis of Miracle Oy Communication strategies**

#### **3.1 Miracle Finland Oy**

Miracle Finland Oy was established in 2007 by Tuomas Pystynen. It's a small consulting company that specializes in database and advanced infrastructure for the most famous software systems, in short they design databases for other businesses. Currently Miracle has 13 IT experts working for them. Miracle is an Oracle partner company and besides Oracle has the only rights to resell Oracle licenses in Finland. In addition Miracle is one of the main members of the International Oracle User groups Community (IOUC). (Almalky & Poursadigh 2012, 3)



## 4 Discussion

The use of social media in B2B marketing began growing 2014. Following year the field grew exponentially when Facebook began truly investing in its B2B marketing properties as well as LinkedIn's continued growth. With this change in the social media field combined with studies showing that B2B social media marketing has been ruled effective, Miracle's wish to not spend much money on marketing budget, as well as my personal interest towards the field, the topic of social media plan was chosen.

It was decided to focus on three social media platforms – Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook – because of their wide reach amongst Finnish audience. The main platform to invest in would be LinkedIn. It's found its place as a tool for professionals to communicate and find answers to their problems. Only cost a company might have with LinkedIn is advertisements, otherwise the platform offers great opportunities in marketing and making oneself known without extra costs.

Possible extra costs are where Facebook is the most problematic. A company Facebook page is free to make and it would be good to have one since it's one of the channels many people find information these days. However getting visibility in Facebook without paying for exposure might be problematic for Miracle since it can add up to quite more than company is willing to spend.

It seems that many people are leaving Twitter and the company is somewhat in trouble so there is no need to use more resources and effort into the platform that might not be able to hold on to its current success.

Even though the Twitter is well kept and used as a basis for creating the content marketing plan, it is important to create cohesive rules for all the platforms so maintaining a consistent brand in the internet would be easy regardless of the channel used. No one wants to follow a company on social media who is just pushing their products or services.

With this in mind everything cannot be made by someone else especially when a company wants to be seen as an expert on their field. But this effort can be directed towards being active in LinkedIn groups and answering possible comments on their posts. All of this combined it needs to be remembered that whoever is doing the updating should come across as a human and add comments to all posts they make since in the internet it is very easy for the audience to forget that the content created for them is done by another person.

When it comes to collecting information about using social media in B2B marketing, it can be quite challenging. Because of its massive growth during the last few years the most relevant information about social media marketing can be found on internet. There are many blogs, kept by experts, full of information about the newest features to be used and how they should be made use of by different entities. One validity issue that this brings to the sourcing is the fact that these are first and foremost opinions that are being expressed.

Even though an opinion might be tested by using it in marketing, it might not work for others. This is why all the advice should be taken with a grain of salt. Other issue would be the trustworthiness of an internet source. I've tried to see that other professional would use these sources and see some validation in that way when it comes to using their teachings. But I decided to take the risk of using only internet sources because with the major leaps all B2B marketing in social media took last year there are not any books yet that would detail the newest properties that are being used.

As stated above one of the credibility issues the theory part has is the fact that much of the theory is based on opinions of experts. Even though they know the subject and have done research it might not mean much when it comes to internet. In internet the group mentality of people is highlighted and the audience might decide to like one thing one day and despise it the next. This makes making "rules" for social media behavior very difficult since predicting the customer reactions is becoming harder.

Another problem with the credibility of the theory is with the information flow. There have been multiple social media studies done to different groups of people and companies. These studies mostly come from the USA which has vastly different social media culture compared to the Finnish one. In Finland people tend to use smaller amount of platforms and spend time on them differently. This has been noted while recommending actions that Miracle should take.

Reading these studies has led me to think that more studies about social media usage in Finland should be done. I think it could be research more how people see different websites and does age affect this opinion. Also how people see the usefulness of different social media platforms and what type of things they look for from said platforms. It should be also asked how Business to Business or Business to consumer companies view their social media usage now and in the future. I think this is an important topic to know more about since social media usage grows all the time and many Finnish companies are not still making use of it the best they could.



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